

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 03298 251545Z
ACTION NEA-10

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R 251506Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3238
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
DIA WASHDC
SECDEF WASHDC
USIA WASHDC
USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 3298

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, SY, IR
SUBJECT: REPORTS OF IRAQI-US CONTACTS SUBJECT OF RENEWED
MEDIA ATTACKS ON IRAQ

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. INITIALLY SYRIAN PRESS RESTRICTED ITSELF TO PUBLISHING
FACTUAL REPORTS ON UNDER-SECRETARY HABIB'S VISIT TO IRAQ,
BUT WITHIN SEVERAL DAYS OF ORIGINAL ARTICLES, SYRIAN
COLUMNIST EXPLOITED VISIT TO RENEW PREVIOUS SYRIAN
ACCUSATIONS THAT IRAQI REGIME HAS COLLUDED WITH US TO
SELL OUT ARAB RIGHTS IN THE SHATT AL-ARAB AND TO WORK
AGAINST SYRIA.

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2. FIRST REPORT WAS MAY 21 MENA DESPATCH FROM
WASHINGTON ENTITLED "AMERICAN SATISFACTION OVER
DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONS WITH IRAQI REGIME" WHICH NOTED
DEPARTMENT HAD EXPRESSED SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT
INITIATIVES AIMED AT IMPROVING US-IRAQI RELATIONS. HABIB
SAID TO HAVE CONDUCTED CORDIAL FRANK TALKS IN BAGHDAD WITH
FONMIN HAMMADI. FOLLOWING DAY REUTERS ARTICLE ON FRONT

PAGE AL-BAATH REPORTED THAT SOURCES CLOSE TO IRAQI REGIME STATED IRAQ CURRENTLY STUDYING MATTER OF RESTORING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH US BEFORE END OF CURRENT YEAR AND THIS WAS MAIN TOPIC OF HABIB-HAMMADI TALKS. SIMILAR ARTICLE ON PAGE 2 WAS BASED ON "US NEWS AND WORLD REPORT" ANALYSIS.

3. ON MAY 24 BAATH COLUMNIST ABD AL-RAHMAN GHUNAIM REVERTED TO FORM MORE TYPICAL OF SYRIA BEFORE THE ANTI-IRAQ MEDIA GUNS FELL RELATIVELY SILENT IN MID-APRIL. BLASTING AWAY AT ALLEGED IRAQI CONSPIRACIES WITH US IN PIECE ENTITLED "VERY SPECIAL RELATIONS," GHUNAIM WROTE THAT WHILE OFFICIALLY THERE NO IRAQI-US DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, US-IRAQI COOPERATION DOES EXIST. HE CLAIMED PIKE REPORT DEMONSTRATED THAT 1973 AGREEMENT WITH IRAQ OVER SHATT AL-ARAB WAS SUPPORTED AND FACILITATED BY US SO THAT IRAQ WOULD PRESSURE SYRIA BECAUSE OF SYRIA'S UNCOMPROMISING ATTITUDE TOWARDS STEP-BY-STEP DIPLOMACY. HE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE BUILDING OF IRAQI OIL PIPELINE THROUGH TURKEY, PROVOKING OF EUPHRATES WATER CRISIS, HINDERING SYRIA'S INITIATIVES IN LEBANON, HALTING OIL TRANSIT THROUGH SYRIAN TERRITORY, MOBILIZING IRAQI FORCES ALONG BORDER WITH SYRIA, AND MOUNTING TERRORIST OPERATIONS AGAINST SYRIA. HE CHARGED THAT IRAQ HAD INCREASED ITS ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH US AT SOVIET EXPENSE AND ALLEGED THAT WEAPONS USED FOR SUBVERSIVE OPERATIONS AGAINST SYRIA WERE SMUGGLED TO IRAQ FROM US. HE CONCLUDED THAT IRAQ HAD GOOD REASON TO KEEP "ITS NOT SO INNOCENT" RELATIONS WITH US SECRET.

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4. COMMENT: WHATEVER EFFORTS MAY HAVE BEEN UNDERTAKEN TO EFFECT RECONCILIATION BETWEEN SYRIAN AND IRAQI BAATH PARTIES IN LATE APRIL AND EARLY MAY, RENEWAL OF ANTI-IRAQI PROPAGANDA IN OFFICIAL PARTY PRESS SUGGESTS THEY HAVE FAILED. PROPAGANDA WAR MAY SOON ESCALATE. US BUSINESSMAN REPORTED TO EMBASSY SEVERAL WEEKS AGO THAT HE WAS IN SYRIA EXPLORING UNANNOUNCED PROJECT WHICH INVOLVED BUILDING POWER BROADCASTING FACILITY NEAR IRAQI BORDER. MEANWHILE, RUMOR IS MAKING ROUNDS LOCALLY THAT REASON FOR CESSATION OF SYRIAN PRESS ATTACKS AGAINST IRAQ IS SADDAM HUSSEIN DYING OF INCURABLE CANCER SO SUCH EFFORTS NOT NECESSARY. MURPHY

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Sent Date: 25-May-1977 12:00:00 am
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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